United Nations S/PV.4766

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4766th meeting

Friday, 30 May 2003, 10.35 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Akram	(Pakistan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Atieh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Wrap-up discussion on the work of the Security Council for the current month

Conflicts in Africa: Security Council missions and United Nations mechanisms to promote peace and security.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-37656 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Wrap-up discussion on the work of the Security Council for the current month

Conflicts in Africa: Security Council missions and United Nations mechanisms to promote peace and security

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and with the consent of the Council, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend invitations to the representatives of Brazil, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Greece, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay to participate in the meeting without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

It is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mota Sardenberg (Brazil), Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi), Mr. Ikouebe (Congo), Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Daratzikis (Greece), Mr. Haraguchi (Japan), Mr. Rastam (Malaysia), Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Mr. Baja (Philippines), Mr. Kamanzi (Rwanda), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Hachami (Tunisia), Mrs. Mulamula (United Republic of Tanzania) and Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Gambari to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

As we all know, the Council has on its current agenda a host of African issues which include the current zones of conflict in Central and West Africa. In a matter of days, Security Council missions will be departing for those two subregions. They will take a powerful message that the Council remains focused on these issues and is actively engaged. Today, we will have a full discussion on how those missions can promote the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Another major objective of this debate will be to analyse the conflicts and complex crises that plague Africa with a view to discussing ways and means and possible mechanisms within the United Nations system to promote durable solutions and peace and stability in the continent. With the participation of Council and non-Council members in the discussion, we anticipate a rich debate and a productive outcome.

I shall now give the floor to Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari.

Mr. Gambari: Thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address members of the Council on the them of this wrap-up meeting: "Conflicts in Africa: Security Council missions and United Nations mechanisms to promote peace and security".

Security Council missions to Africa are a clear demonstration of continuing interest in and engagement with crises and conflicts on the continent. Beyond that, however, they need to be effective instruments for conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. In this regard, the selection of mission locations, the timing of the missions and what they accomplish on the ground as well as at Headquarters become the most critical questions that need to be addressed at this meeting of the Council and in the future.

Therefore, as the Council embarks on its forthcoming missions to Central and West Africa, there is a need to apply the lessons learnt from previous experiences and also to explore further linkages between peace and security, on the one hand, and social and economic development, on the other. This short

presentation will highlight a few areas in which I believe the Council may wish to consider further efforts, and it will conclude with some recommendations on the way forward.

As to applying the lessons learnt, first, the Council would be well served by considering using multidisciplinary United Nations expert support prior to and after despatching its fact-finding missions to potential or actual conflict areas in Africa. This would promote a more efficient use of Council missions' time while on the ground and also facilitate effective follow-up actions. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations recently led a multidisciplinary mission to Côte d'Ivoire and a similar one is planned for the Central African Republic, to be led by the Department of Political Affairs. These are examples of an integrated multidisciplinary approach whose benefits may include comprehensive conflict prevention and conflict-management strategies.

Secondly, preventive measures that have the prospects of success must be designed and implemented through active collaboration with and support from subregional and regional organizations.

Thirdly, in general, conflicts in Africa cannot be resolved without taking their regional and global dimensions fully into account.

Fourthly, it should be recognized that the international community has not yet been particularly successful in post-conflict peace-building in Africa and, perhaps, elsewhere and that more concerted efforts need to be made in these areas. In this regard, the failure of the international community to engage in serious efforts to consolidate peace in the Central African Republic, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau after the end of the earlier international peacekeeping operations in those countries can largely be attributed to the relapse into conflict there. Therefore, greater and more creative efforts by the international community in a concerted and comprehensive manner, involving not only the United Nations, but also the Bretton Woods institutions and donor countries, are essential for successful peace-building.

I shall now address some pressing issues demanding urgent consideration.

The Security Council missions to both Central Africa and West Africa are particularly timely because they will provide the Council with an opportunity to learn first hand and thus make informed judgements on a host of issues. In Central Africa, for example, we would urge the Council, first, to evaluate the current mandate and resources of the various United Nations peace operations for much-needed adjustment, especially the missions in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and secondly, to revisit the possibility of holding an international conference on the Great Lakes region to discuss the future of the region, as the idea of the conference gained momentum recently as progress was made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi peace processes.

Moreover, the mission to West Africa provides a unique opportunity for the Council to assess the capacity of regional organizations to participate in peace operations and, in particular, to assess how the international community might assist the capacity of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States in general and their deployment to Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire respectively; to evaluate progress made in accomplishing the benchmarks that should guide the pace of the drawdown of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL); to assess the vulnerability of Sierra Leone to security threats after the withdrawal of UNAMSIL and, in this connection, to evaluate the capacity of Sierra Leone's security sector to respond to any internal and external threats; to explore with the Sierra Leone Government and development agencies what effective peace-building measures need to be enhanced as UNAMSIL draws down its troops; to ascertain how the international community might best seize the opportunity of the forthcoming elections to facilitate an end to the conflict in Liberia and evaluate the type of engagement that could result in creating conditions conducive to credible nationwide elections in Liberia; to assess the current degree of engagement in Côte d'Ivoire to promote the effective implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement up to the 2005 elections.

My recommendations are as follows. Upon the return of the mission to Headquarters, the Council may wish to consider the following topics for thematic discussions in order to promote greater coherence of action by the system as a whole: the rule of law and the promotion of internal security and human rights; minimum conditions for holding credible elections; security sector reform; measures to enhance transparency and accountability in the management of

State wealth and resources; strengthening State authority through the civil service and legislatures; and enhancing the capacity of regional organizations to undertake peace operations.

Secondly, while visiting actual or potential conflict areas, the Security Council should develop sustainable contacts with major stakeholders or parties on the ground. That will, inter alia, facilitate the transmission, reception and consideration of the various resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council and directed at those actors.

Finally, when the missions return, the Security Council may also wish to consider measures to foster greater coordination and coherence in the United Nations response at the intergovernmental level to the interrelated issues of peace, security and development in Africa. To move that process forward, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider holding joint meetings periodically as a way of mobilizing international support for Africa in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution, for which the Security Council has a mandate, and of post-conflict economic rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, for which the Economic and Social Council has a unique responsibility.

In conclusion, let me say that the Secretariat stands ready to assist the Council in the further elaboration and subsequent implementation of proposals that might emanate from today's discussion and subsequent ones aimed at promoting peace and security in Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of France, who will lead the Security Council mission to Central Africa.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): In the context of the Security Council mission that will visit Central Africa from 9 to 16 June, I should like to refer to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

Several years ago, the Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced a situation of conflicts that we are told, caused some 3 million deaths. The Security Council immediately took up those conflicts, which involved practically all of the countries of Central and Southern Africa in one way or another. In close liaison with the Secretary-General, the Council worked with the parties signatory to the Lusaka Agreement, the founding Agreement of the peace process concluded in 1999 and aimed at establishing the peace process and moving it forward. The Council's efforts were complemented by those of other international institutions such as the Bretton Woods institutions, which have become major actors in restoring peace in the Great Lakes region.

But we must recognize that the international community's efforts to restore peace to the Congo have sometimes been frustrated. To the extent that provisions were put in place to end the conflicts, the conflicts seemed to adapt themselves and to resume in a different form, a bit like a bacterium developing resistance to medicines that are used against it. Thus, we saw the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo transform. From a regional conflict motivated by security concerns, it changed into an even more complex, multifaceted crisis with other dimensions: a domestic Congolese dimension; regional economic stakes; and local conflicts in a situation of total anarchy and human tragedy.

The complexity and the sometimes difficult-to-understand nature of those conflicts are obviously not a reason to give up, first of all because the human cost would be alarming, but also because the peace process that we are supporting is beginning to bear fruit. There has been considerable movement towards the withdrawal of foreign forces. A political transition agreement has been signed among the Congolese. We have begun to disarm foreign armed groups. That is certainly not enough, because the withdrawal is not complete, because the transition must truly be launched and because the repeated rebel offensives in the east are sabotaging the attempts to disarm the armed groups. It is also not enough because progress at the political level is still far from becoming real progress in the life of the Congolese; massacres continue and instability remains. However, we must build on that progress so that the advances in the peace process are consolidated and peace returns.

So what can we do today? The first thing we can do is to make clear to all the parties to the conflict in the region and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that it is their peace process. No one can make peace for them. We can help them, but the restoration of peace is their primary responsibility. Moreover, it is in their interest. Perhaps some of the parties continue to think they can gain some immediate advantage by playing the military card either directly or by proxy,

but, beyond the very short term, everyone has an interest in a negotiated political settlement in which the legitimate concerns of all are taken into account. The parties to the conflict have adhered to that logic by signing the Lusaka, Kampala and Pretoria Agreements and others, but now those agreements must be fully respected and implemented.

It is not enough to explain to and remind the parties of their commitments or, where necessary, to apply political pressure on them to respect those commitments. The Security Council must sometimes undertake more concrete measures to help the parties implement their commitments. That is the raison d'être for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), deployed to facilitate the disengagement of the combatants two years ago, the disarmament and repatriation of armed groups last year and the implementation of the Luanda and Pretoria Agreements after that. Concrete measures should also be undertaken to neutralize the forces driving the conflict. That is the substance of the work accomplished by Ambassador Kassem's Panel of Experts on halting the plundering of the Congo's natural resources. Other concrete measures aim to respond to urgent needs when such measures are necessary: when we need to stop massacres or when a situation becomes intolerable.

That then, is the basis for the Security Council's role: a political message, on the one hand; action on the ground, on the other. We cannot have one without the other. Today, the Council is active in precisely those two areas. We have just adopted resolution 1484 (2003), which authorizes the deployment of a multinational force to Bunia. That force, established at the Secretary-General's request, will have a mandate to stabilize the situation in Bunia and help ensure the security of the civilian population. Headed by France, it will be deployed until 1 September, the time needed to enable the Secretary-General to deploy a strengthened MONUC contingent in that city.

Still, this emergency action cannot suffice. The Council cannot limit itself to authorizing a coalition of countries to send a multinational force to Bunia. The Council must also strengthen the political framework of the peace process — in short, it must give new momentum to the process, which clearly has moved forward, as I said earlier, but which needs to be put back on track. This is precisely the goal of the mission that the Council will be sending to Central Africa in a little over a week, and which I will have the honour of chairing.

The mission will have many messages to convey, in particular to remind the Congolese parties of the imperative need immediately to end military operations. This is indispensable, as a major military operation is being launched in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also necessary in order definitively to set in motion the process of the disarmament and repatriation of foreign armed groups.

Another message will be to tell all those who support armed groups, whoever they may be — rebels, militias or foreign armed groups — that they must immediately put an end to this type of support and stop being engaged in conflict by proxy, and that they must also prevent such support from being given.

The mission should also explain to the Congolese parties, which, at long last, have reached agreement — due to the personal involvement of President Mbeki with respect to the modalities of the transition — that they must now, without losing any more time, begin that transition. The mission should also remind all the parties that the wealth of the Congo must be used for the benefit of the Congolese people.

In addition to these messages, we also need to consider what potential confidence-building measures we could propose. A good-neighbourly pact has been suggested, which we should consider. There is also the prospect of an international conference for the Great Lakes region, in whose preparations Ibrahima Fall is also involved. On the basis of what our interlocutors will say to us, we will then identify the means available to us to continue to assist the peace process, in particular through MONUC. It is thus in the light of the lessons learned from that mission that we will read the report that the Secretary-General has just provided to us, and which contains proposals on adapting this peace operation's mandate to the latest challenges to the peace process.

I should like also to touch upon the situation in Burundi, where the mission will also go. Indeed, the Council is less involved there than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, simply because there is no United Nations peacekeeping operation in that country. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned also by the situation in Burundi, where, for two years now, the Arusha agreement process has been under way. The political transition envisaged in that agreement has

taken place, with the accession on 1 May of the former Vice-President. This is testimony that the process is working and that, more than ever, it must be supported. It must be supported because there are real difficulties facing the process, primarily the absence of a ceasefire. This is a paradoxical situation: a peace process is being established that encompasses more than 20 parties, while the last rebels are continuing to fight. The transition also needs to be supported because the economic situation in the country is extremely difficult. We all are aware that a key condition for the success of a peace process is the provision of economic assistance, which is indispensable to bringing about peace.

In the near term, we must therefore strive to help the Burundians to consolidate the Arusha process, which is already irreversible. To do so, we will need to provide answers to several questions: how to provide our support to the establishment of the African mission; how to induce the last rebels to join the negotiations process; and how we can help the Burundians to fight impunity. The mission, which will spend an entire day in Bujumbura in order to meet all the political players in Burundi and which will also attempt to establish contacts with the last of the rebels, will, I hope, help us to find answers to these difficult questions.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Let me convey my warm thanks to the Pakistan presidency for choosing this subject for the wrap-up session at a very opportune moment, just before the two Council missions to Africa, when we need to reflect on their role as a major instrument of the Council and how they help achieve our wider objectives. I am very grateful to the Special Adviser for his address to us this morning. Liaising with the Secretariat and using the full range of the United Nations expertise on our business is absolutely essential.

Council members will recall that we restarted the practice of Council missions on the ground in 1999, with the dramatic visit made by five of us to Jakarta and East Timor, and our regular travels since then have, I think, enhanced the image of the Council as an operational and not just a remote legislative body.

In my experience over four years of participation, Security Council missions add an extra dimension to the Council's work on peacekeeping, peace-building and conflict resolution. They demonstrate in a graphic way the importance which the Council attaches to particular regions or conflict situations, and they can put the spotlight on crisis situations such as the fighting and the blockage in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a way which Governments concerned cannot ignore. They give Council ambassadors the chance to speak frankly and personally to heads of State to explain the Council's objectives more fully than can be done in Council resolutions and to secure the personal commitments from key players which are vital in finding lasting solutions to conflict.

They also bring home to Council members themselves the stark realities of what conflict brings upon the people involved. Council missions bring us face to face with more than just political and military leaders. We have made a point of meeting civil society and non-governmental organization representatives, and sometimes ordinary people on the ground. It is difficult for me to forget a side trip that I made with my colleagues from the Netherlands and Namibia to Kananga, in the dead centre of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We were met by the dignitaries of the town, and, as we drove into this wholly trashed city, out of the damaged buildings all the children of the town poured out, crying out in French, "Paix! Paix! Paix! Paix!" and ran alongside the convoy as we went through. They thought that just our visit to the town, the three of us, was going to bring peace to the central Congo and allow them to restore a city of three quarters of a million people.

We had to recognize also as we left, with the sun going down, to catch the plane before it was dark, that the same children were standing silently at the side of the road, wondering why we were leaving before we had restored a normal life to them and to their families. We have to recognize that we are welcome in these places, but that we create expectations which are visible on the faces of the children as we come and go.

I think, therefore, that all our meetings with people on the ground in these missions have been extremely useful in broadening Council understanding of the impact of conflict and in helping us make the connection between big military and political events and the individuals they affect. We also help to ensure that civil society voices are heard by their own leaders, which is not always the case.

I hope that the Council's mission to West Africa will put those ideals into practice. We know how closely intertwined the conflicts in West Africa have become. The civil war in Sierra Leone was encouraged and exacerbated by President Taylor; Liberians have been fighting in Côte d'Ivoire. All these conflicts have produced a pool of displaced and dispossessed young people who will fight anywhere as long as they are paid. The instability unleashed has returned to roost in no uncertain manner in Liberia itself. It is now clear to us that lasting stability in the subregion depends on sustainable peace in every country of the region.

In Côte d'Ivoire, we shall insist to all players that there is no alternative to Linas-Marcoussis. In Liberia, we aim to build on progress at the peace talks next week in Ghana and to secure President Taylor's personal commitment to a ceasefire and a comprehensive peace plan. Having heard Mr. Gambari this morning, I am very grateful to him for his recommendations for our mission. I think that they accord with our intentions in taking on this task next month.

On the Council's Africa business, it is important for the United Kingdom that we have been able to work closely and will continue to work closely with the Government and the delegation of France. I am pleased that Ambassador De La Sablière is leading the mission to the Great Lakes next month. I hope that he will allow me also to comment on the Great Lakes area.

With that mission, which is about to happen, the Council will have visited the Great Lakes for four successive years. This sustained engagement has led to some real progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We often talk about the move from war to post-conflict reconstruction, and we have seen it happen in Sierra Leone. But in Central Africa, the challenge is huge. It needs unremitting effort over a long period to persuade warring parties truly to commit to peace and to leave the military path behind. That requires the parties to take risks, to put national reconstruction ahead of personal and political ambition, to share power and to compete fairly for popular support. Above all, it requires courageous leadership. That is the message that we must get across in our face-to-face meetings with the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours later this month. The Burundi leg of the mission will allow us to demonstrate our support for the second phase of the Transitional Government, the new President and Vice-President and the African Union peacekeeping mission.

Coming back to West Africa, I am glad that we have been able to include Guinea-Bissau in our West Africa mission, on a joint visit with colleagues from the Economic and Social Council. This is more than just a cosmetic demonstration of cooperation between our two Councils. It is essential that in a case such as Guinea-Bissau, where economic and social mismanagement is at the heart of the country's instability, both Councils should be actively engaged in working together for a solution. I am glad to have been part of this enlarged collective process during my time on the Council, and I entirely agree with Ambassador Gambari's recommendations in that respect.

Early on in the West Africa mission, we shall visit Nigeria and Ghana. This reflects the importance we all attach to working closely with the regional structures. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sent troops to Côte d'Ivoire to monitor the ceasefire, and they are now helping to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. ECOWAS has appointed a mediator, the former Nigerian President, General Abubakar, to facilitate peace talks between the Government of Liberia and the rebels. The Security Council has to back up those regional initiatives with both political and financial support so that in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia we can deliver a united message that carries maximum weight.

But this sort of cooperation has to be a partnership. Members of the Council can provide resources for regional peacekeeping — for example, as France has done for Côte d'Ivoire — or funds for reintegration and development. France, the United States and the United Kingdom have for some time been developing a peacekeeping training programme for African States. But we are serving a process that must be owned by Africans. The countries concerned have to take responsibility and demand accountability for the implementation of peace agreements and the establishment of effective peacekeeping measures.

We as outsiders can help, but we cannot achieve much without the total commitment of those most directly affected. The way in which the Council conducts its business on Africa must reflect this fundamental requirement of partnership, in full recognition of the political, economic, cultural and financial aspects and sensitivities of every issue. Then,

we may start to consolidate the process of bringing peace and security to Africa, which we all want to see.

The President: I now call on Ambassador Koonjul, the representative of Mauritius, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of African States for the month of May. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Mr. President, you have asked us to speak on behalf of the African Group. But due to the late notification, it has not been possible for us to coordinate the statement that I am going to make. Principally, I will be making a statement in my national capacity, although I am sure that many of the views that I express are shared by my African colleagues.

We are very pleased that the Council is holding a public meeting devoted to Africa after quite some time. It is taking place in this format, a wrap-up session, at a time when two important Security Council missions are going to be travelling to Africa. We wish that we had had a chance to hold such a meeting well ahead of time so that some of the suggestions that we could have made could have been taken on board in the terms of reference.

We very much welcome the decision of the Security Council to undertake these missions. We think that they are extremely useful; they are always very beneficial. They are helpful to the Council members themselves because they give members an opportunity to meet with the political and military leaders, as Sir Jeremy Greenstock has said, as well as to meet with civil society, both individuals and the non-governmental organizations. More importantly, it is an opportunity to impress upon the political leadership and the people in those countries the message of the Security Council.

But we believe that it is also important that the missions come back to New York with some message that the people of those countries have for the Security Council and that action is taken on those requests from the people, who are the most concerned in the matter.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock mentioned that the Security Council is going to have its fourth mission to the Great Lakes. Four missions have taken place in four years. We believe that each mission should build upon the previous one and should make progress on the basis on what has taken place before. Unfortunately, we have not seen that. We have not seen that from the point of view of the Security Council. We believe that any mission organized in the future should try to see what has happened in the past — the failings of past missions and how to improve upon them.

For example, we believe that the mission to the Great Lakes —Burundi, for example — should have something new to it. In Burundi, there has been a peaceful transition. Peace has now more or less been established. We think that that country now deserves to receive greater attention from the Economic and Social Council. Perhaps this would have been a great opportunity for a joint mission between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. That would have sent the signal that, yes, we have now passed the conflict stage; we are in the post-conflict stage, and it is now time for post-conflict peace-building and development. It would also have sent the message that the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council are working together to try to establish firmly the grounds for peace. We therefore believe that the terms of reference should be prepared accordingly.

We also believe that in preparing for such missions, especially to Africa, it is extremely important that there be proper coordination and consultation with the African Union. We have felt that this is lacking. We have felt that we can very often be at cross-purposes with the African Union. The African Union is also concerned about the conflicts in Africa, and it has been involved in some of the peacekeeping efforts there. It is important that the Council should try to consult and to coordinate its activities with what the African Union is doing or has been doing. We remember that last year, when the Security Council set up the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, we did a lot of work to try to bring about better coordination between the Security Council and the African Union. It was even proposed that there could be joint missions between the Security Council and officials of the African Union. Of course, that is a long shot, and something that is not going to happen tomorrow. But I think we should start to consider these issues; we should at least start with some better coordination.

We also believe that the missions to both the Great Lakes and Western Africa should consider the desirability of setting up a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)

programme for the whole of the continent. Generally speaking, we believe that quite a bit of progress has been achieved in terms of peace in the continent, but such peace cannot be sustained until, and unless, we address the problem of DDR. That was even recognized last year at the level of the G-8, when in their communiqué the ministers agreed that there could not be sustainable peace unless there were proper DDR. Such a DDR programme must be comprehensive and must enable former combatants to be reintegrated into normal day-to-day life and economic activities. Otherwise, those people will soon be employed elsewhere to continue the work that they are accustomed to doing.

We therefore think that the mission, while in the field and upon its return, should try to look into what more should be done in order that we may make progress in the area of DDR. We recall that many DDR camps have been built — for example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to supposedly receive combatants who were going to disarm themselves. However, very few of them have gone to those camps. In fact, no more than 200 to 300 people have actually gone. Last year when the Security Council visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there was a big show of weapons being destroyed after having been collected through the DDR programme. I do not think that was enough to really address the problem of DDR. The Council will need to address the problem of how we should move from this attitude of voluntary disarmament to one with more incentives given, if not a kind of aggressive disarmament of combatants. Unless we do that, we feel that we will not be able to achieve long-term, sustainable peace.

With regard to the mission to West Africa, the African Group regrets that it was abruptly postponed for other important matters. We have of course been told that Africa is still important, but that other urgent matters had arisen that had to take priority over the mission. We believe that urgency and importance are matters of perception. We believe that what is important to someone also becomes urgent.

We had been concerned that the mission's travel to Guinea-Bissau was in question. I am very pleased with the reassurances given by Sir Jeremy Greenstock that Guinea-Bissau is going to be included in the trip to West Africa. We also feel that it is important that the full mission team be in Guinea-Bissau. Anything less than that would send a very wrong signal. We believe that Guinea-Bissau is at a crossroads. We have said in the past that Guinea-Bissau is at what we would call the post-conflict stage, but it is also at the pre-conflict stage. In the paper circulated by the President, the President wrote about the role of the Security Council in trying to engage in activities geared towards the prevention of conflict. This is precisely one situation in which the Council can be very effective in trying to prevent the possibility of a full-fledged conflict in a country.

We are also pleased to note that some members of the Economic and Social Council will also be travelling to Guinea-Bissau around the same time as the Security Council mission. As we have said, we feel that there should be more joint missions to countries like Guinea-Bissau and Burundi.

In conclusion, I would like to make two brief comments regarding the terms of reference that have been circulated. We agree fully with the terms of reference that have been circulated with regard to Burundi. We think that the Security Council should impress upon that country the need for security and military reform. This is an important aspect of peace there.

With regard to Liberia, we believe that, in addition to what has been indicated in the terms of reference, the Security Council should try to find ways to have some kind of constructive engagement with the authorities in that country. It is important that, in the run-up to elections, the Security Council and the international community accompany the country and its people towards free and fair elections. Apart from what has been included in the terms of reference, we feel that there is very much a need for engagement. That would also be very much in line with what the African Union has been recommending.

I would like to conclude by thanking you once again, Mr. President, for the opportunity given to us to revisit the problems of Africa. We would like to convey our best wishes to the two leaders and to all the members of the Security Council who will undertake the mission. We wish them every success.

The President: I now call on the representative of South Africa, Ambassador Kumalo, in his capacity as Chairman of the African Union and as the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We are honoured to participate in this meeting of the Security Council. We commend your able stewardship of the Council, Mr. President, during this eventful and critical time. It is indeed important for us during this wrap-up meeting to thoroughly reflect on the work of the Council, particularly in the context of promoting peace and security in Africa.

Over the years, the Security Council has remained actively seized of matters of conflict on the African continent. The Security Council has sought to utilize all the different mechanisms at its disposal in seeking to fulfil its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in Africa.

The fact-finding trips that the Security Council is about to undertake will add to the practical experience of the Council as it continues to grapple with complex conflicts in West and Central Africa. The African Union is intensely aware of those problems and has actively involved itself in the area of conflict prevention and resolution. The Council's missions will come across conflict situations that have a common denominator: underdevelopment and the scramble for natural resources. There is also the difficult issue of armed groups from neighbouring countries that cross borders to foment violence and defy appeals to return to their countries of origin. These are people who are not refugees and who do not even accept voluntary disarmament and repatriation. There are also indigenous armed groups that refuse to join in negotiated ceasefire agreements, which makes it impossible for their fellow citizens who have embraced peace to rebuild their lives.

The Council's role in these complex challenges remains important, because Article 39 of the Charter confers on the Council the responsibility to decide whether a particular breach of the peace or act of aggression constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and whether to take appropriate steps to maintain or restore peace. Absent that provision, the role of the Security Council in resolving conflicts in Africa would always be challenged. Questions are raised more sharply as recent events have added to the perception that the Security Council may be distracted from conflicts in places such as Ituri, which is located in a remote corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council must remain central to the universal search for peace. The Council has to remain focused in taking effective collective measures to prevent or remove threats to the peace, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. In that context we should, however, ask if the mechanisms in the Council are adequate to deal with such complex issues of conflict resolution.

The Security Council is the only body that has the global mandate to maintain international peace and security. As such, the Council cannot afford to be seen as either selective or hesitant in becoming engaged in bringing about peace. For the people of Africa, it is not how the Council remains actively seized of their plight that matters, but how effective it is in bringing about peace.

The States members of the African Union have already learned, through their own bitter experience, the vital linkage between peace and security and the broader objectives of sustainable development. Through the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, African leaders have forged a common vision and a shared commitment to a path of sustainable growth and development. They have called on the world community to complement their efforts and to implement the Millennium Declaration's pledge to Africa, which emphasized support for the prevention of conflict. For us in Africa, the Security Council remains an important partner in this noble endeavour.

An encouraging development towards meeting these challenges is the working relationship that is developing between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The creation by the Security Council of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and the formation under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict have created a new mechanism that will potentially lead to a more comprehensive approach to addressing conflict situations.

Through such an inclusive process, the Council has the potential to develop a greater sense of the complexities of certain conflict situations and contribute to comprehensive and integrated strategies for peace-building.

The Council also has to consider the availability of resources, both financial and political, in backing up its decisions. United Nations Members have repeatedly noted that the Council has best succeeded when its decisions have been accompanied by unity of purpose and political will. The combination of political will and the requisite resources was perhaps best exemplified by the Council's resolve in the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee under the leadership of Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock.

The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is growing. That relationship centres on numerous practicalities, based on the determining principle that multilateralism remains the only suitable path to global peace and security. The United Nations is the beacon of our belief in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of every person and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. Through the Charter, we are resolved to unite our strength against the enemies of peace. For that reason, the many people who continue to suffer the brutality of war and conflict in Africa and elsewhere continue to ask, "If not to the Security Council, then to whom should we turn during our hour of need?"

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the representative of Angola, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): On behalf of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting at this very meaningful and timely moment — just a few days after we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union.

The agenda proposed by the Pakistani presidency for today's meeting is a mark of the attention which the Security Council gives to the problems affecting the African continent, and reflects the urgent need to find ways to strengthen the commitment of the international community to Africa.

My statement this morning will focus on the need for enhancing the efficiency of the mechanisms currently used by the United Nations in the Organization's engagement with Africa, especially the role of the working groups.

It is gratifying to notice the growing role in the United Nations system of ad hoc groups — the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa; the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict; the groups of friends; and the Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution, on behalf of which I am speaking this morning.

These instruments, if properly used, can and should be important tools in promoting peace and dealing with the crises that afflict the international community, especially on the African continent. It is our view that there is a need to enhance the work of those groups by rendering their recommendations more pertinent to the work of the Security Council. Furthermore, working groups should find mechanisms for cooperation and coordination with sanctions committees, as it is established that the imposition of sanctions often remains an important tool for guaranteeing compliance with internationally accepted norms, leading to the resolution of conflicts. This was the case with Angola, where sanctions against the rebel movement, when properly applied and monitored, became a vital factor towards ending the war in my country.

The Security Council open meeting on the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, held on 22 May 2002 under the leadership of my colleague Ambassador Koonjul, made important recommendations on cooperation with the Economic and Social Council on confidence-building in the Mano River region, on the role of the special representatives of the Secretary-General in Africa, on the establishment of groups of friends and on the question of cooperation with the African Union and subregional organizations.

However, the gap between the decisions and/or recommendations and their implementation continues to be a matter of great concern. Therefore, there is a need for the working groups to undertake a more rigorous assessment of the recommendations in order to make them more implementable and action-friendly by the United Nations system, especially the Security Council. A working group's effectiveness will depend

on its capacity to focus on concrete action or concrete situations and on its ability to mobilize the international community's attention, as well as to provide proper advice and support for an appropriate and timely response.

The case of Guinea-Bissau and the manner in which it is being addressed jointly by the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries emerging from conflict, the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau constitutes a good example of the positive participation of working groups. The coming joint mission to be undertaken by the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to that country will certainly reinforce this point.

As I mentioned earlier, the Ad Hoc working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa made pertinent recommendations to the Security Council on cooperation with the African Union. To meet this objective, better coordination and consultation with the Union and regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern Africa Development Community, is needed. The response of the international community and the Security Council to conflicts still prevailing in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and the Great Lakes, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a perfect example of what better cooperation can achieve.

I would like to welcome the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at enhancing this cooperation by establishing an Office within the Secretariat to deal especially with African issues. The recent appointment of Mr. Gambari as head of that Office is equally well received. This represents another good example of the assistance being provided to the African Union to enhance its capacity.

The signing by the States members of the African Union of a protocol creating the Peace and Security Council was a significant step taken by the continent to face challenges in conflict prevention, management and resolution. We therefore welcome the United Nations readiness to assist in the implementation of that protocol.

One of the main concerns of the continent continues to be the need for a timely United Nations peacekeeping response to African crises — as has been reiterated once again this morning in earlier statements — as the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and more especially in Bunia clearly demonstrates. This morning, the Council adopted resolution 1484 (2003) authorizing the deployment of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force following a general appeal to Member States. We commend the leadership of France and the active support of members that will be participating in that effort.

I would like to conclude by saying that peace and development are the two main challenges in Africa and in many other regions of the globe today. This demands a comprehensive and multisectoral engagement by the entire international community. This meeting today, ending Pakistan's presidency for the month, should be considered a step forward in our Council's search for new modalities to respond to emerging crises in the world in which we live today.

The President: I thank the representative of Angola for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since this is perhaps the last meeting over which you, Sir, will preside this month, I wish to take this opportunity to express to you my delegation's gratitude for the effective way in which you have led the Council's work during this very difficult month. I also express my delegation's appreciation for your having included on the agenda of this wrap-up meeting the theme "Conflicts in Africa: Security Council missions and United Nations mechanisms to promote peace and security".

My delegation believes this exercise to be timely and necessary. The Security Council's missions to Africa have become a crucial instrument for its decision-making process. These missions are carried out with United Nations support and thus with the direct or indirect participation of Member States. My delegation therefore believes that today's discussion is integral to the commitment to the transparency with which the Security Council should undertake its tasks.

The decision-making process in relation to conflicts in Africa must be as comprehensive as possible. Conflicts are caused by a conjunction of circumstances that are often deeply rooted in history, with organizational forms, power structures, formulas for the exploitation of natural resources and ancient modes of domination that are perpetuated by many of

these conflicts. It is necessary for all these elements — ethnic and inter-State disputes, fighting among various political factions, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, the employment of mercenaries and the use of children as combatants — to be taken into account. They must be integrated into the vision that the Security Council will embrace when it takes crucial decisions for the peace and the future of Africa. Mexico believes that analysis of the conflicts must be approached from this comprehensive perspective, also taking into account the regional dimensions that explain their deep-rooted causes. We must do so in dialogue and communication with regional organizations, with the political leaders, with members of civil society — with all those who participate actively in these processes and who must be part of the solution.

The Security Council must also tackle Africa's problems in a creative process of cooperation with United Nations bodies in all spheres of activity. Africa is the point of convergence of all United Nations agencies and of their work. Therefore, Council action must reflect the spirit and the goal of cooperation that we in the Council have called "partnership" with the bodies of the United Nations.

Conflicts in Africa are also associated with unforeseen situations related to grave natural disasters and with endemic situations such as famine and epidemics. Therefore, those elements should also be understood comprehensively in our work. Of course, the financial conditions and the economic prospects that African countries face must also be incorporated as elements of judgement; hence the importance of engaging in dialogue and interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions and other international financial institutions.

To resolve Africa's problems, we must address their causes with long-term endeavours that have a genuinely preventive nature. In that connection, we believe that it is the international community's efforts with regard to education that, over the long term, must yield the best results in order to establish conditions of peace, stability, understanding and harmony in Africa.

All of that can be appreciated when we leave the Council Chamber and go out and encounter reality in Security Council missions to Africa. There is an abyss, sometimes very difficult to cross, between our conceptions of Africa's problems as we sit in this Chamber and those that we gain upon encountering — albeit briefly and sometimes superficially — those problems on our journeys to Africa. But Security Council missions to Africa are proving to be a basic tool for achieving, first of all, a direct dialogue between Security Council members — as was pointed out here by Ambassador Greenstock — and the leaders of the countries with respect to which the Council must take decisions. They are also an opportunity for dialogue with civil society and with the actors involved in the conflicts. They are an opportunity to have direct contact with United Nations operations and to establish more fluid communication — beyond that on paper — with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and with all the bodies that are working together under the United Nations banner in the Organization's missions in African countries.

From the work that my country is doing in the Sierra Leone Sanctions Committee, we understand that fundamental aspects for making decisive judgements as to the role and nature of the sanctions are the ability to engage in dialogue with the communities affected by such Security Council decisions; the ability to establish direct communication with United Nations representatives who daily assess the impact of sanctions and the difficulties posed by their implementation; and the ability to reaffirm our commitment to full compliance with such measures, face to face with the leaders of the countries in the region and with the political actors whose conduct we wish to influence through such mechanisms.

In that way, the Security Council has, over the past year and a half, carried out a series of missions that, from Mexico's perspective, have had very positive results. In February last year, the Council sent a mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea, which, inter alia, had the task of pointing out to the parties the priority that the Council placed and continues to place on settling conflicts peacefully and by expressing the will of the parties. The Security Council then had the opportunity to support the work of the United Nations and to make the message of peace very clear. The Council has also carried out missions in Central Africa and in West Africa that have been part of its work in recent years. We see the establishment of dialogue between the Council and the main players in the region as the fundamental purpose of those missions.

In that connection, the exchange of opinions with governmental representatives and with members of various political factions have given the Security Council the opportunity to assess the importance of its own decisions in a much more real and direct way. Recently, the Council has considered the question of sending a multilateral force to support the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), particularly in Ituri province. In that respect, my country would like to stress its support for and gratitude to the Uruguayan contingent, which is now trying to carry out its humanitarian mission in Ituri and Bunia under extremely difficult conditions. We believe that the decision adopted by the Council to send an Interim Emergency Multilateral Force to Africa is a correct and necessary decision that expresses the Council's determination to fulfil its commitments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We believe that the mission, to be led by the Permanent Representative of France, will also have the opportunity to assess what new measures the Security Council can adopt in order to help substantively to consolidate the peace process under way in that country and in that region.

We feel that it is particularly important to follow up on the measures proposed by the Panel of Experts with respect to the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which is at the root of many of the conflicts that we must tackle today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also must make neighbouring countries understand their obligations and their responsibility not only to stay outside of the conflict and fully to respect the sovereignty and self-determination of the Congo, but also to prevent the trafficking of any arms and any action from their territory that would foster violence and confrontation within the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council will also soon undertake a visit to West Africa. This will be a new opportunity to strengthen the efforts of the Council in the region and to provide an accurate regional perspective.

The situation in West Africa has deteriorated following the resurgence of internal conflicts in various countries — conflicts that are interlinked in a very complex fashion. This visit to Guinea-Bissau, to Côte d'Ivoire, to Liberia and to Sierra Leone, as well as dialogue with neighbouring countries in the region, will also be an opportunity for the Security Council to adopt, in future, decisions that will help these peace processes. In particular, the Security Council will have the opportunity directly to assess the difficult conditions being experienced in Liberia, whose situation contributes significantly to the instability prevailing in the region. We must also, in carrying out this exercise, review the role of the sanctions, both in Sierra Leone and in Liberia.

There are other conflict situations in Africa to which the Security Council must also provide its ongoing attention. This is the case of Somalia, where the internal conflict is becoming increasingly acute and the humanitarian situation of the civilian population is constantly worsening. We believe that in this respect the Council must consider additional measures in order to encourage the holding of an inclusive dialogue, with the participation of all of the parties in Somalia, reasserting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity of Somalia.

Lastly, we would like to stress the fundamental threat posed by the illicit trafficking of arms, and its connection with terrorist acts and with the continuation of armed conflicts. We must make an effort to stop the trafficking of small arms and light weapons in Africa, which have the effect of actual weapons of mass destruction. The number of victims claimed annually by conflicts where they proliferate and where there is indiscriminate access to them by combatants shows that these arms are, for all intents and purposes, weapons of mass destruction.

The Security Council must encourage actions to prevent conflicts. To that end, it will be necessary to strengthen the cooperation of the United Nations with regional bodies in the terms already discussed here in previous meetings, in particular in the meeting that took place in April between the Security Council and representatives of various regional organizations, in which Africa was properly represented.

Mexico is determined to continue to foster ties of friendship and cooperation with Africa. Our country is convinced of the need to devote special attention to the peoples of Africa and expresses its willingness to contribute to promoting peace, security and development for the benefit of its peoples.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: This meeting is being held at a very important time and addresses pressing international issues. The African continent is witnessing an outbreak of armed conflicts. Recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire have been characterized by the excessive use of force, violence against civilians and the use of arms as a means of asserting one's presence and of achieving both political or economic aims. Conflicts are threatening to spill over beyond State borders, and there is a danger of their taking on a regional dimension. For these reasons, the Council must take a much more effective and rigorous stand and devise new ways and means of discharging its primary task of maintaining international peace and security in general and in Africa in particular.

We note that, in the face of the bleak political and humanitarian scenario in various regions of Africa, and in the face of the suffering and worsening humanitarian situation of tens of thousands of civilians, the efforts of the United Nations, which represents the will of the international community in dealing with African conflicts, have been characterized by both successes and failures. Hence there is a need to mobilize the political will to assist in the efforts of the Organization, in order to consolidate the progress achieved and to avoid setbacks.

To be sure, the past experience of the United Nations in settling armed conflicts and building peace in various regions of the world, particularly in Africa, has shown that political will is a necessary factor in supporting efforts to settle conflicts and to increase the effectiveness of conflict-management mechanisms.

The key condition for building and creating peace is to ensure a political commitment at all levels — domestic, regional and international — in an integrated and holistic manner. Similarly, the various stakeholders that have an interest in the future role of the United Nations and of the Security Council in dealing with African conflicts are asking themselves whether this role is going to be restricted to managing conflicts, to the maintenance or building of peace and to the provision of humanitarian assistance to those who need it, or if it will enable the United Nations to act effectively in order to prevent and contain conflicts before they break out and before they have claimed victims and displaced civilian populations?

In this respect, Egypt believes that a number of the conflicts that have recently broken out in Africa could have been avoided, or at least contained much earlier.

As a result, one of the crucial challenges for the future role of the United Nations in dealing with conflict in Africa is the establishment of an effective early-warning system through the work of the representative of the Secretary-General and the offices of the United Nations in Africa, under the guidance of the Security Council, in cooperation and coordination with the secretariat of the African Union and regional organizations and actors concerned.

The international community must manage conflicts in Africa by dealing with them in a holistic fashion, encompassing all their political, social and economic aspects. Egypt believes that the role of the United Nations in conflict management in Africa faces a considerable challenge. There is a lack of donor commitment and a failure to meet peace-building commitments in countries emerging from conflict. As well, there is, in the countries concerned, a delay between the implementation of United Nations security policies and the establishment of social and economic infrastructures, in particular the implementation of institution-building programmes; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; and programmes for demining and for prosecuting war crimes among others.

There is no doubt that effective coordination between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as with the regional actors and organizations in Africa, also requires ongoing financial assistance so that those actors and institutions can carry out their difficult peacekeeping duties in the various regions and countries of Africa.

Egypt notes that the Security Council is attempting to use a regional focus in responding to conflicts in Africa; that is thoroughly appropriate. That tendency has been reflected in Council debates, particularly on the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in West Africa, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi in Central Africa. A regional focus for conflicts in Africa contributes to containing

those conflicts, limiting their negative impact and enhancing the effective action of the United Nations.

Egypt also welcomes the Council's intention to send two missions to West Africa and Central Africa, in June 2003. That initiative will enable the Council to meet the following goals. First, the Council will be able to reaffirm the international community's commitment to finding balanced, lasting solutions to conflicts in the two regions. Secondly, the Council will be able to explore the realities and developments of the situation, as well as the extent of the people's suffering due to armed conflict. Thirdly, the Council will be able to identify the genuine needs of the United Nations for an effective presence on the ground in areas of conflict. Fourthly, the Council can assess the effectiveness of Council policies and resolutions on conflicts in West and Central Africa.

We hope that the two missions will achieve those goals and return with a clearer, more holistic vision of how the United Nations should deal with conflict in Africa in the future. We also hope that the results of those missions will be followed by the strengthening of United Nations mechanisms for preserving and promoting international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burundi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Sir, to recognize the noteworthy achievement of the Pakistan presidency for the current month. It is the result of your great activity and personal skill. Burundi is proud of the work that you have accomplished, and will continue to accomplish, in the Council.

The Security Council devotes the greatest share of its time to debates on conflicts in Africa. It is regrettable that Africa always remains in a situation of conflict, which, unfortunately, is slow in reaching an end. The Council will soon undertake missions to Central Africa and West Africa in order to observe on the ground the difficulties of the various peace processes under way and to discuss with national and regional leaders, as well as with political and military actors, how to restore peace in those two African regions in crisis.

I will speak particularly of the upcoming Security Council mission to Central Africa. In that context, I associate myself with the statement to be made shortly on behalf of the Central African States by the Ambassador of the Congo, the current Chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States. It is true and important that solutions for the region must be integrated in order to achieve peace, security and stability in the entire region. The conflicts are interconnected. As well, individual situations are made difficult on all levels by the conflicts ravaging this part of Africa.

I welcome the fact that the United Nations will send, at almost the same time, a multidisciplinary mission of United Nations agencies active in Central Africa. All these missions testify to the real commitment of the entire United Nations system to stabilizing Central Africa.

Burundi greatly appreciates the Council's visits on the ground, its missions to Central Africa for four consecutive years. They have contributed to progress in the search for peace, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi. On the eve of this fourth visit to the subregion, my delegation would like to make the following comments and recommendations so that the mission can truly meet the expectations of the populations that are victims of a state of war that has become unbearable and so that the mission can strengthen the new leadership in the second phase of the transition in Burundi. That transition is crucial and must end a programme expected to last 18 months, while adding the programme that could not be accomplished during the first part of the transition because of the ongoing war.

The first recommendation: we believe that the Council's missions should give priority to calling for the respect for and implementation of political agreements and ceasefires that have already been signed. So long as signatories do not attempt to implement what they have agreed — even though that may of course require many concessions on their part — the peace progress could become bogged down or even regress.

With regard to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lusaka and Arusha Agreements continue to be the fundamental points of reference. However, the side agreements that have been signed since then should not be overlooked. In that connection, the Security Council should remind everyone that they must respect their commitments,

given that there is a tendency among some signatories to question these agreements or — in the case of those who have not signed the agreements and have been invited to do so — simply to threaten to attack the agreements and to nullify them.

Among the commitments undertaken in all the agreements regarding Burundi there are also measures to be taken against those who reject a negotiated peace. Both the region and the United Nations were witnesses when all that was agreed upon and signed in the Arusha Agreement. It is always good to remind the armed groups and movements who refuse to come to the negotiating table of all that. I refer to the Lusaka and Arusha Agreements because they are very closely interrelated. There will be no peace in Burundi unless there is peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and vice versa. The same can be said for the region as a whole.

My second recommendation is that Security Council missions to Central Africa should promote lasting solutions, as the region is still living under the threat of a new genocide. The deep-rooted tensions linked to colonial history and to the poor leadership of the first years of independence are at the heart of the repeated violence in the subregion that culminated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, as well as the genocidal massacres that took place in Burundi in 1993, a few months before the genocide in Rwanda. This has also culminated in today's humanitarian catastrophe in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ideology of genocide and those responsible for genocide remain in the region, spreading arms and death across borders. In order to put to rest the demons of violence and to end the physical extermination of neighbours, we should endeavour to remember what took place in the Great Lakes region of Africa so that we may discover the truth, better address the problem at its roots and prevent similar catastrophes for future generations.

The signatories of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi agreed to ask the Security Council to establish a neutral and independent international judicial commission of inquiry to determine responsibility for all the violence that has characterized the country's life since its independence in 1962. The people of Burundi await the Council's response during its visit to Burundi.

However, the Security Council must understand clearly that the purpose of revisiting the past is not to reopen wounds or to exact revenge. Rather, it is to gain understanding and to make it possible for those responsible to reflect and perhaps to ask forgiveness of their past victims and to be reconciled with them. A healing process is necessary. The Arusha Agreement calls for a criminal tribunal to punish these crimes. But it also calls for a truth and reconciliation commission. All of this will of course depend upon the recommendations to emerge from the inquiry. That is why the commission is so important. It should be set up as soon as possible, as the Council has already done in similar situations, such as in Sierra Leone and, soon, in Cambodia. As I have said, the purpose is to promote reconciliation on a solid foundation. As someone said earlier with regard to the fight against impunity, the Security Council is called upon to help Burundi find the means to fight this phenomenon, as that would be the surest way to build a future on a solid foundation.

My third recommendation is that Security Council missions be encouraged to deliver a clear message to the protagonists in our conflicts. We often hear from the public of the Central Africa subregion — at least in Burundi — that the Security Council is being repetitive in its messages. Perhaps they are not aware of the virtues of repetition; or perhaps people forget that it is the protagonists who have the primary responsibility to settle their disputes. The Council can only help Burundians and Congolese to achieve peace.

Nevertheless, there are situations that call for more firmness on the part of the international community. When, for example, the rebel group of Pierre Nkurunziza — the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Front pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) — launches deadly bombs against the capital's neighbourhoods or other population centres throughout the country, that is called terrorism and must be condemned as such. When that group takes schoolchildren and student hostage and places them in combat, it is violating the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That too should be noted.

Along the same lines, the movements and organizations that defy the international community by refusing to come to a negotiating table open to everyone should be neutralized. That is true in Burundi of the Parti Libération du Peuple Hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) of Rwasa Agathon. In a region that, as I have said, is still

living under the threat of genocide, and in a country such as Burundi, where the situation is so conducive to a repetition of similar violence, how can we continue to accept a movement that bases its ideology on ethnic violence? All of this must be said, and such movements must be condemned.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council, which, in its presidential statement of 2 May, reminded the PALIPEHUTU-FNL that the international community was finding it increasingly difficult to understand the legitimacy of its struggle.

Fourthly, it is important for the Security Council to adapt the mandates of its interventions to the often tricky conflict situations in Africa. In both Central and West Africa, setbacks have sometimes derailed the efforts of United Nations or regional observer or peacekeeping missions. In Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Council and regional organizations are sometimes suddenly called upon to modify mandates and to increase mission troop levels. Such situations are sometimes unpredictable. At other times it is inevitable that such situations should arise, because the terms of a mandate are not adapted or the troop numbers are insufficient. The case of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a good reminder of that.

With regard to Burundi, the presence on the ground of a United Nations Office, as well Ambassador Dinka's chairmanship of the Committee charged with following up the Peace Agreement, reflect the unfailing commitment of the United Nations to Burundi.

The newly created African Union responded to the United Nations appeal for an African solution to African problems by deciding to send an African ceasefire observer mission, consisting of some 3,000 troops. After some initial delays, it seems that the means are finally being found to deploy that mission, which is, in fact, a force. But that effort must be supported, because the force must be able to work for some time. Apart from the financial and logistic problems, there are also questions regarding the mandate of the force, which will, we hope, be discussed with the Security Council during its mission. This will be the first time that the pan-African organization has sent such a large force to a member country.

Of course, a decision will have to be made about what mandate to base the African mission's mandate upon. Will it be based on Chapter VI, VII or VIII of the Charter? Which of the three is best suited to the Burundi situation? The Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, representing the facilitator, Nelson Mandela, explained to the Council last December that the African mission must ensure that the ceasefire is observed and that, at the appropriate time, it hands over to a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Burundi.

Here, I would also like to say that it is important for us to demonstrate flexibility with regard to the principles that guide the dispatch of a peacekeeping force, because situations in different countries vary. The United Nations, for example, hesitated to send a peacekeeping mission to Burundi because the rebels refused to lay down their arms before cantonment. That was one reason why the Security Council was unable to decide to send a mission. But if we demonstrate a little patience and flexibility, the rebels will be encouraged to lay down their arms once they are cantoned. Once they are in that situation and we can work with them psychologically, conditions might be created under which a peacekeeping operation could function.

The transition from the African mission to a United Nations mission need not be difficult, but of course it must be prepared for. That is particularly important, as a United Nations peacekeeping mission would include a military component, as well as a political, humanitarian and, most important, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component, in addition to electoral support and so forth. The African mission does not have all of those components, but they will be necessary in the case of Burundi.

There must be cooperation between the Council and the African Union so that the ongoing efforts of the international community in Burundi can be successful. The forthcoming Council mission will provide an opportunity for discussion with the Burundian authorities.

Lastly — my final recommendation — the population of the Great Lakes region hopes that the political support of the Council will be accompanied by an improvement in the economic and humanitarian situation. In a region where political conflict is exacerbated by insufficient resources to go around and chronic poverty, the message of peace is wasted on

people who are starving. Of course, significant efforts are now being made. But they are still inadequate, and the mobilizing role of the Council in encouraging donors will be decisive. According to a Burundian proverb, those who share little or nothing accuse each other of being thieves. That reality is still more dramatic when it leads to the physical elimination of others in order to take their place, or to take a larger piece of the pie.

Before concluding, I would like to stress the importance of cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in assisting in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa. Burundi has sent a request to the Economic and Social Council for the establishment of an ad hoc advisory group to follow up the economic and social situation in Burundi and to mobilize donors. I believe that a decision on that issue will be taken at the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva. We hope that, as soon as such a group has been set up, it will be able to work closely with a similar group established under the auspices of the Security Council so that their efforts can be synergized and help to return stability and peace to Burundi. I hope that the forthcoming Council mission to Africa will be a complete success.

The President: I thank the representative of Burundi for his kind words addressed the delegation of Pakistan.

Mr. Chungong Ayafor (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish like preceding speakers to thank the Pakistani presidency, and in particular you, Sir, for your highly creative initiative of organizing at the end of your presidency of the Security Council this wrap-up meeting on "Conflicts in Africa: Security Council missions and United Nations mechanisms to promote peace and security".

I welcome the presence among us of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa, Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari. I also wish to thank him for his important contribution at the opening of today's debate. His forceful suggestions will undoubtedly help our Council to improve its efficiency in addressing African issues.

It is perfectly clear that this open debate, which is benefiting from the participation of States non-members of the Council, will allow us to take into account their views on this issue. My delegation believes that this is a guarantee of legitimacy and of broad approval of the proposals to be made during the course of today's discussion. At a time when the international community's attention is focused on other theatres of conflict, Cameroon welcomes your decision, Sir, to centre this discussion on United Nations action in conflicts in Africa.

At first glance, the subject might seem to have lost some of its lustre and to be somewhat threadbare, having been taken up so often in recent years by the Security Council, which now devotes 62 per cent of its time to this issue, by other United Nations bodies and by myriad other international forums.

Obviously, Africa remains at the heart of the Security Council's concerns. Indeed, the Council's members and — with respect to an open debate on conflicts in Africa — the States Members of the United Nations have demonstrated outstanding creative insight in offering fresh and innovative solutions and strategies. All that is now needed to implement these suggestions is the genuine political will of the parties involved and the firm resolve of the members of the Security Council to support Africa in its struggle to promote peace and security on the continent. However, the approach that has been chosen is particularly novel insofar as it stresses the contribution of Security Council missions in areas prone to conflict, in this instance the promotion of peace and security in Africa.

As members of the Council are aware, missions of the Security Council in general, especially to Africa, are vital and play a critical role. They allow the Council's members to assess the situation on the ground, to enhance dialogue with the parties and to obtain information directly from the protagonists. Moreover, such missions allow the Council's members, inter alia, to better grasp first hand the nuances and structures of the conflicts in question. They also allow the Council to present a united front, which is extremely important, especially with respect to the parties to the conflict and the personnel of United Nations agencies active in the field.

I should like to focus my remarks on a few of the questions raised by the problem being addressed at this wrap-up debate: the role of Security Council missions and the relations they may engender between the Council and African regional organizations.

In recent years, out of 19 Security Council missions to conflict zones throughout the world, 13 were dispatched to Africa, as though to justify the time that the Security Council has devoted to the consideration of conflict situations there. While Security Council missions in the field provide an opportunity unequivocally and publicly to broadcast the positions and decisions of the Council, should they not also — given their political impact on the protagonists — become an extremely useful tool for preventive diplomatic action? In situations in which there is every forewarning of potential conflict, such missions could make a significant contribution to defusing tensions before hostilities erupt and could usefully complement the preventive diplomacy of the Secretary-General.

Moreover, it would be desirable for Security Council missions to become a consistent and integral part of the Council's decision-making process. The level and quality of the information that they provide to members of the Council through direct contact with the protagonists on the ground have a definite influence on members' perception of the situation and can ultimately have a positive impact on later decisions. In such circumstances, should the Security Council not plan to systematize these missions in the field, conditions permitting, when it is preparing to take an important decision on any given situation? The members would thereby be able to adopt their positions in full awarèness of all realities in the field.

Of course, in my delegation's view, such an approach is not about bargaining over the details of any future decision the Council may take or about going into the field with preconceived notions. The idea, rather, is simply to arrive at a deeply-felt conviction by listening to the parties to the conflict and to all the protagonists while sending them strong messages. We have no problem with a decision to send a mission into the field that takes into account the views expressed in open debate by States that are not members of the Council, since some will be regional actors. The Council's credibility cannot suffer from such participation in the preparation of decisions, including — depending on the case — the adoption of approaches designed to motivate, suggest decisions to the parties and, if necessary, help them to understand. In any case, the parties' perception of the Security Council's decisions can only be improved by their having been consulted and heeded, while the Council need not feel bound. The most important thing is to reach a heartfelt conviction that allows a fully informed decision to be taken.

We regret, however, that the planned Security Council mission to West Africa could not take place under those conditions. Along the same lines, regional organizations are among the actors that are met on the ground during Security Council missions. It will be recalled that, on 11 April 2003, the Council devoted a public debate to its relations with regional organizations in the light of the new challenges to international peace and security. On that occasion, Cameroon focused its statement on the Council's cooperation with African regional and subregional organizations.

Security Council missions are also valuable opportunities to improve working relations with African regional and subregional organizations, particularly in the way the Council considers decisions and positions that it takes on issues of interest to the continent that are before the Council. The Security Council has, in a consistent and encouraging way, developed exemplary institutional relationships with the African Union and with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We saw that recently with the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, for which ECOWAS conducted a mission here in New York and received the Council's blessing. However, the Council has sometimes proved to be highly selective when there has been a contradictory regional decision on a conflict under consideration.

We encourage the Security Council to strengthen its institutional relationships and to maintain them during its field missions, since one of the guarantees of effectiveness would be to achieve a perfect balance between regional efforts and Council action for conflict prevention and settlement in Africa. My delegation is eagerly awaiting the time when the Council will be able to work in a completely harmonious way with regional organizations, regardless of their political influence or the perception that its permanent members may have of them. This issue deserves much attention.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the forthcoming Security Council missions in the Great Lakes region and in West Africa will be an opportunity to promote the ongoing peace process, to explain Council positions and to become fully convinced of the need to finally adopt a comprehensive

approach at the level of those subregions. It must be said that West Africa enjoys the advantage of having a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the entire subregion. We hope that the next United Nations inter-institution mission in Central Africa, together with the Security Council mission in the Great Lakes, will result in recommendations to that end.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): We are very pleased to participate in this discussion today. I believe it is a very timely and useful initiative on your part, Mr. President, to give Security Council members a chance to address their expectations of the upcoming missions and to hear reactions and comments from other members. I think we have had some useful commentary and observations today that will better inform our thinking, both about these two specific missions and about the process.

Many speakers have already addressed the important role that the United Nations and the Security Council have to play in Africa, and they have put forward various ideas about how that impact could be improved. But I think we all recognize that the fact that we are sending two Security Council missions to Africa in the next 45 days indicates how important we think Security Council engagement is in helping to find solutions.

Of course, when we talk about Africa in the Security Council, we tend to focus on crisis and on the many problems that exist, and that is entirely correct. The missions help us to do that better and in a more focused way. I did want to note, however, that Africa has come a long way in recent years. A decade ago, single-party States and military dictatorship were the norm on the continent; today, we see democracy in approximately 33 African countries, according to a recent United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report. Many countries are making significant strides towards effective governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development reflects African commitment to sustaining and expanding those positive changes. That is all to be welcomed, and we strongly support that process.

We have also seen some long-term conflicts come to an end. Last October, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Rome Peace Accords, which brought peace to Mozambique. Sierra Leone and Angola are emerging from long years of bloodshed and are now on their way to post-conflict reconstruction and economic revitalization.

But, as we all know too well, many parts of the continent remain stuck in conflict, and there is much work to be done by the United Nations, by the Security Council and by all Member States of the United Nations. The dire situation in the Ituri region has commanded much of the Council's attention in recent weeks — perhaps not as publicly as other issues we have been addressing, but those on the Council know how much time we have been spending on it — and today we adopted a resolution to address that situation. Much like the British in Sierra Leone, France has taken the lead on a multinational force that we fully support and for which we commend the French Government. We expect the Security Council mission to enable the Council to contribute in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a long-term strategy to end that terrible conflict.

As we look at the many trouble spots in Africa, many of which have already been addressed today, we seek to find ways to build sustained commitment from the Council and from the United Nations, but, very importantly — as some others have already pointed out — from Africans themselves. We support the efforts of neighbouring and other regional States to help to resolve conflicts. The United States has provided money and training assistance to several of those operations and initiatives, and we will continue to find ways to help to create the right context for peace in each area of crisis.

The fragile peace process in Burundi continues to require careful monitoring and sustained assistance, and we were heartened by the transition of the presidency on 1 May. In West Africa, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire is precarious and, again, requires international attention to ensure that the parties continue to cooperate in implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and that we all work to ensure sufficient funding for the operations of the Economic Community of West African States, which will be key to the long-term success of this mission and of our peace efforts.

The United States firmly supports sanctions regimes directed against parties that are intent on continuing the cycle of violence and instability. By restricting access to the arms and the financing used to

undermine international security, sanctions can be a valuable tool in minimizing threats. Our goal is not to punish, but to use sanctions to change the policies of regimes that threaten their neighbours, and we all know who they are.

With respect to Liberia, the Security Council has adopted strong sanctions measures. The Liberian people are facing a severe economic and political crisis brought about by years of civil war that President Taylor has repeatedly exported across his neighbours' borders. The upcoming peace talks in Ghana provide an opportunity in which the Council may need to be prepared to play an eventual support role.

Also, in the long term, support for conflict resolution and prevention is well served by respect for international human rights and humanitarian norms, as well as a commitment to good governance. The United States Government is currently involved in a variety of programmes in several African countries designed to promote democracy, good governance and economic development. We also hope to work with our African partners to further promote these goals through the Millennium Challenge Account, which has good governance, sound economic policy and investment in people as its three pillars.

However, as Ambassador De La Sablière and others have pointed out, ultimately solutions to Africa's conflicts must come from the parties to the conflict themselves. They cannot be imposed from the outside. Regional and international actors and the Council can provide the necessary assistance to help maintain peace, but genuine progress depends, in the end, on the political will and meaningful positive steps of the belligerents on the ground.

Our task — one that we hope the upcoming Security Council missions will promote — is to push belligerents to make the key choices for peace and then to help the parties reach that end once they have made that decision.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mota Sardenberg (Brazil): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to congratulate you and your delegation for your excellent work in guiding the Council's deliberations during the current month. Your initiative in organizing a debate on conflicts in Africa and on the importance of Security Council missions and of United Nations mechanisms in promoting peace and stability is certainly very timely. It also provides an additional opportunity to focus attention on the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a dramatic situation is unfolding that could deteriorate to the point of endangering an important region of Africa, with serious humanitarian consequences.

Despite our limitations, Brazil will contribute to the United Nations rapid deployment force adopted today by the Security Council, and we wish to commend the French Government for the role it has played in this respect. Our Government supports the recent call of Secretary-General Kofi Annan for a peacekeeping force with a mandate stronger than the one given to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), in order to tackle the violence that has erupted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Out of solidarity, Brazil is greatly concerned with the course of events in Africa. My country owes much of its identity to the vitality of its African heritage. In addition, fraternal relations have been built on the basis of our ethnic, cultural and historical affinities. Finally, Brazil fully recognizes that peace, security and development in Africa are crucial not only to the African people themselves, but also to the international community as a whole.

As clearly stated by President Lula da Silva, strengthening ties with Africa is a political, moral and historical obligation for us. In this spirit, our Government is engaged in reinvigorating bilateral relations with African countries. The Brazilian Minister of External Relations, Ambassador Celso Amorim, has just completed visits to seven African countries, thus paving the way for President Lula da Silva's visit to the continent next August.

At the same time, Brazil and its African partners have been exploring possibilities for mutual cooperation within the framework of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, to which five African countries belong.

Deep transformations have brought Africa to the forefront of the international agenda. Conflicts are perhaps the most visible and disturbing feature of this

process of change. But there have also been important, positive developments, as shown by trends towards democracy and by the willingness of African leaders to devote their energy and creativity to social and economic reconstruction, as embodied in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The United Nations continues to be a source of hope in Africa. When peace is challenged, we expect the Security Council to make use of the entire range of its diplomatic resources.

Brazil has taken part in United Nations peacekeeping operations which were decisive for achieving peace and stability in Angola and Mozambique.

Security Council missions such as those scheduled for Central and West Africa next month are valuable, as they enable direct interaction with local actors, assert a legitimate international presence and reaffirm the commitment to peace and stability.

Bearing in mind the patterns related to the upsurge or resurgence of conflicts in Africa, one should address the root causes of conflict with a view to creating sustainable conditions for peace and stability. Conflict prevention involves not only the prudent use of the measures at the disposal of the Security Council, but also efforts to promote development strategies and support poverty-eradication measures.

The shared responsibility of all — Member States, the Organization itself, international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, the international donor community and civil society groups — is an important ingredient of successful strategies in Africa. Closer coordination between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council could prove to be an indispensable tool to address issues related to conflict prevention or resolution. We value the recent creation of an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau within the Economic and Social Council, in which Brazil is participating. The upcoming mission of the Security Council and members of the Advisory Group to Guinea-Bissau, in which Brazil will take part, is a positive example of the potential for coordination among the principal organs of the United Nations.

The fact that that African countries hold the responsibility for their own development should not be ignored. Since its inception, NEPAD has been a cause for optimism as to Africa's destiny. It contains mutually reinforcing measures that allow for the creation of a virtuous circle of socio-political inclusion, development and peace. NEPAD also offers new opportunities regarding development assistance.

Resources to support NEPAD could be usefully channelled through multilateral institutions to foster triangular as well as South-South cooperation. Since 1996, Brazil has followed a debt-alleviation policy as regards African countries that has contributed to the success of initiatives such as NEPAD. In recent years, we have written off more than $1 billion in debt in the hope of fostering, to the extent of our ability, development in Africa.

The peace and development issues and the problems that affect many African countries are really very complex indeed. Their resolution depends on political will, solidarity and coherent and effective strategies. In this effort, all of us have a role to play. Brazil is striving to do its part.

The President: The last speaker before we break for lunch is the representative of the Congo. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to speak to the Council today on behalf of the members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS): Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.

First, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your initiative of convening this meeting, which provides the subregion I represent with an opportunity to sketch the general outline of developments taking place in that part of the African continent in the area of peace and security, within the framework of partnership with the United Nations. I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, Mr. Gambari, for his excellent briefing, which contained suggestions that were entirely compatible with the expectations of Central Africa.

For 11 years now, Central Africa has had a United Nations body for cooperative action tasked with promoting preventive diplomacy in this subregion

universally viewed as particularly sensitive: the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Committee held its nineteenth ministerial meeting two weeks ago in Brazzaville, from 14 to 17 May 2003.

Since I will later focus on the United Nations missions in Central Africa, I would like to point out that those missions have been intensively prepared for several weeks now in New York, where representatives of the Central African countries have gathered since the beginning of this month to meet with high Secretariat officials to discuss the content of the two missions: the Security Council mission and the inter-agency mission. Both are to go to Central Africa at the beginning of next month, and our representatives have been making preparations for the visit. Since the Congo is the current Chairman of ECCAS, it was my honour to represent all my colleagues at the ministerial meeting in Brazzaville — I shall later describe that meeting. A report on the meeting will be distributed later to all States Members of the United Nations.

I would like to stress that at that important meeting, the ministers, above all, welcomed the progress made in most States of the subregion in the area of peace and security. In Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, my own country of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, significant progress has been observed, although that progress remains to be consolidated in certain cases.

That is why urgent appeals have been made to the international community, in particular to the United Nations and the donor community, to provide the appropriate, substantial assistance enabling the stabilization and subsequent improvement of the situation. In particular, there is need to help in the implementation of peace and ceasefire agreements when they have been signed, and to support the various programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. There is need also to provide assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

The ministers noted that in most cases, we must above all provide concrete follow-up to the financial pledges already made by the international community for countries such as Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Naturally, everyone is aware that peace-building also requires, above all, the improvement of the living conditions of the population and the economic reconstruction of the countries.

With respect to the Central African Republic in particular, the ministers of the countries members of ECCAS meeting in Brazzaville adopted a joint declaration appealing to the international community to provide substantial assistance to that country at this crucial yet promising stage.

The ministers also expressed their concern at the tragedy unfolding in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in Bunia. They called on the Security Council to amend the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in order to adapt it to the situation on the ground. In that respect, ECCAS welcomes the adoption by the Security Council this morning of resolution 1483 (2003), authorizing the immediate deployment of a multinational force to Bunia.

I should like to express the gratitude of the countries of Central Africa to the United Nations, which over recent months has created many initiatives for the subregion. We recall the Council's 22 October 2002 meeting on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations system and the Central African region in the maintenance of peace and security. That meeting led to the Council's presidential statement of 31 October 2002 (S/PRST/2002/31), which gave new impetus to the partnership between the United Nations and Central Africa and which served as a frame of reference for the discussions of the nineteenth ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, to which I referred earlier.

That is why the ministers have welcomed the dispatch of a Security Council mission to the subregion of Central Africa in early June, to visit areas where great tension persists. They welcome, as well, an inter-agency assessment mission tasked with formulating an approach for problems of peace, security and development in Central Africa that is comprehensive, integrated, resolute and concerted in nature. The ministers expressed the hope that this inter-agency mission might recommend, among other things, the creation of a subregional United Nations office to support the work of peacekeeping and peace-building missions and of the special representatives and special envoys of the Secretary-General in Central Africa.

As well, the ministers welcomed the preparations for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region. They issued an appeal for all countries of Central Africa to participate in the organization and holding of the conference.

Finally, since we are discussing conflict prevention and resolution, I would be remiss if I concluded without announcing that previous to the Brazzaville ministerial meeting of the Advisory Committee, a seminar was held from 12 to 14 May on the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The outcome of the seminar, in particular the plan for the subregion's activities, will be presented during the first biennial meeting of countries Members of the United Nations, which will be held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003.

The President: I thank the representative of the Congo for his kind words addressed to the Pakistan delegation.

There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. With the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.